

Dance Index

Isadora in Art





Munich: November 1902 (used as a cover for the Magazine **Jugend** 1904). Pastel-drawing by Franz von Kaulbach.

Dance Index

Editors

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN
PAUL MAGRIEL
DONALD WINDHAM

Managing Editor

MARIAN EAMES

Comment

When dancers die, there is nothing left for those of us who have never seen them dance but the memoirs and pictures of those who have. They are never very satisfactory. To date, there have been no dance films of any great importance taken of great personalities. Perhaps, so far, photographers (as with Isadora) have had the best of it. But so intense is our pleasure in dancing that no matter how fragmentary a memory, or scrappy a sketch, we treasure it for a sacred relic. At least the memory, the drawing had some actual connection with the performance. Some pure, direct and accurate comment must remain in it, no matter how weak or slight.

With Isadora Duncan, who is the capital figure in the dance of the first half of the twentieth century, there is an even more tragic disproportion between what artists and writers felt about her, and their ability to record it with any independent objectivity for those who never saw her. Her admirers

numbered among their legion the greatest painters and poets of her time, and yet what we see of her in their work is certainly less than what she must have meant to them. The principal artists knew her intimately; perhaps this is one reason they never could fix her in their media. The intensity of their personal relationship defeated her use as a model. The better they knew her, the more remarkable she seemed; and finally they were baffled by her multiform largeness, which their paint or bronze or poem could never contain.

It was easier, in a sense, for the Greeks. We recall scarcely a single name of a great Greek dancer who was individually celebrated as a theatre performer. And yet the anonymous members of the chorus are still alive for us in many sculptures and vases. The artists synthesized the essence of the dance-movement, and thereby created the type of dancer.

(Continued on next page)

Cover: Paris. ca. 1906. Water color and pencil drawing. Auguste Rodin.

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The work reproduced in this issue of *Dance Index* is fragmentary; the most vivid examples are sketches. The line drawings of de Segonzac have more meaning for us than the archaistic decorations of Bourdelle. And there were some fine artists who saw her and adored her, and repeatedly went to every performance, who never even attempted to portray her. The sculptor Gaston Lachaise, who in his youth had made a series of small memory sketches of Ruth St. Denis, was profoundly moved by Isadora, but his inspiration from her went into other works in which he portrayed a more generalized movement. Pavel Tchelitchew saw her in Berlin, and his verbal description is one of the most vivid imaginable, but he made no drawings. Jean Cocteau, whose pen-and-ink sketches have often an astonishing incisive small-scale intimacy, and who knew her well, has never published one drawing of her. Jacob Epstein never made her head, and there is no death-mask.

Isadora released possibilities of movement through the human body in a single decade which opened up the closed tradition of theatrical gesture developed in the previous

four centuries. From the arm-movements in Fokine's *Sylphides* of 1909 to our latest ballet season, the effects of her revolution are still felt. Aside from her own incomplete but splendid book, she still has no real biography. When some day it will be written, the pictures here may serve as illustrations.

We are indebted to Mr. Alain de la Falaise of Les Editions de la Jeune Parque, Paris, for permission to use the unpublished drawing by Auguste Rodin on the cover. It is taken from one of the collotype illustrations for Rodin's "Pour Le Venus de Milo," which has just appeared in a superb edition. Mr. Allan Ross Macdougall, the author of the article, was a close friend of Isadora's in the last years of her life. Most of the drawings, including the Maurice Denis charcoal sketch (here reproduced for the first time), belong to him. We remind interested readers that *Dance Index* has already published important Duncan material in John Martin's "Isadora Duncan and Basic Dance" (Vol. I, No. 1) in Carl Van Vechten's "Dance Criticisms" (Vol. I, No. 9, 10, 11), and in "Gordon Craig and the Dance" (Vol. II, No. 8).

L. K.



ca. 1906. Bookplate monogram (I.D.).
Woodcut by Gordon Craig.

Isadora Duncan and the Artists

Allan Ross Macdougall

At various times during her later years, Isadora Duncan was heard to say, when questioned about the genesis of her dance: "I sprang full-fledged from the head of Zeus!" We who knew and loved her never quite dared challenge the dogmatic statement, although we knew that her art, like many such manifestations of genius, was a rare plant of slow and continual growth. We knew, and of course Isadora also knew, that the final, full flowering of her dance bore slight semblance of relation to the first wrinkled seed planted within her, who knows how or when.

Through the years the seed was watered by many rains and its first frail sprout warmed by many suns. The growth of the plant was nurtured and encouraged by many outside influences; occasionally it was pruned by self-criticism. Whatever dancing the young Californian did in her childhood days in San Francisco and her early travels across the continent to New York, certainly bore no relation to that exhibited at her tremendous final performance in Paris in 1927, the 49th year of her life. The innocuous little pieces mimed with Delsartean gestures to music by Ethelbert Nevin and the lesser Romantic composers, were childish, fumbling, clay-modeled figurines compared to the heroic, the monumental works such as César Franck's "Redemption," or the Tannhäuser "Overture and Bacchanale," which

were only part of that last performance at the Mogador Theater.

In her early days Isadora's dance was always referred to as *Greek*. This, doubtless, because she adopted flowing Greek draperies and performed her dance with feet and arms bare; she also confessed quite frankly that she studied Hellenic sculpture and vase paintings.

"During my youth," she once wrote to the editor of the French daily, *Progres d'Athènes*, "I spent long hours of admiring enthusiasm before the Parthenon and its friezes, the frescoes, the Greek vases, the Tanagras, not with the idea of copying them or their attitudes, or the divine expression of these masterpieces, but really, after studying them at length, to try and get right to the depths of their primordial being and to attempt to discover the 'secret' of their ecstasy through spiritual exploration of the symbolic ideas of their gestures. From their mystery came my dance—not Greek, not Antique, but in reality the expression of my soul moved to harmony by Beauty."

From photographs it can be seen that in the '90's Isadora neither dressed *à la Grec* nor skipped about with unshod feet. Certain studio photographs taken in 1898 in New York, show the 20 year old dancer wearing ballet slippers and a dress fashioned of lace.¹

1. Reproduced *Dance Index*: Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1942: "Isadora Duncan and Basic Dance."

According to all accounts it was not until she had reached Europe and had met and been influenced by the English Philhellenes and the artists of Paris, that her dance became "free." The tentative shoot from the wrinkled seed began to open out, drinking in with avidity the warmth of the new climate of art and appreciation to which it had been transplanted.

If in her later years Isadora gave much to painters and sculptors so that she became, without any doubt, the most portrayed woman in the world, it is certain that in these early years at the turn of the century, she

also received much inspiration and unspoken direction from artists with whom she associated. And together with the marvellous Greek collections of the British Museum and the Musée du Louvre, William Blake also contributed his share of inspiration and direction. I used to own, until some bibliophilic pilferer purloined it from Djuna Barnes to whom I had lent it, the dancer's copy of the Gilchrist Life of Blake. The copious marginal notes in the handwritings of Isadora and of Gordon Craig attested to a diligent study, not only of the text but also of the illustrations.



Isadora Duncan's Berliner Tanzschule

Berlin: 1904. Caricature from *Jugend*: "In this period we shall finish with Mr. Beethoven. In the next we shall begin on Mr. Aeschylus." "Leave that alone, Frau Duncan, and teach us Mr. Richsdorfer instead." Richsdorfer was the name of a popular rag-time dance, taken from a Berlin suburb.)

Isadora's own story of her brief career in England where she gave what, for want of a better phrase, is called "drawing-room entertainments" in the London houses of the gentry, and danced the First Fairy and other minor choreographic roles with the travelling Shakespearean company of the late Frank Benson, has been told in her autobiography. The English experience was merely a repetition, with cultural differences, of her life and art in New York, even down to her theatrical essays in dancing.

The turning point of Isadora's career as a dancer was undoubtedly her first visit in the year 1900 to Paris, the supreme capital of European art and culture. Then it was that she spent long hours and many days studying the Greek vases in the Louvre. With her brother Raymond—a gaunt young man who had not yet adopted his quasi-Greek get-up of hand-woven chiton and chlamys and hand-tooled sandals—the young visitor made the rounds of all the museums and monuments of the City of Light. "There was not a monument," she later said, "before which we did not stand in adoration, our young American souls uplifted before this culture which we had striven so hard to find."

It was in that fateful year of 1900, at the exciting Exposition Universelle, that Isadora felt the tremendous impact of the double-barreled revelation of the marble and bronze of Auguste Rodin and the great tragic dancing of the Japanese artiste Sada Yacco. These two experiences left indelible impressions on her sensitive mind. And with the youthful Californian intensity with which she was pursuing culture, Isadora and her English companion, Charles Halle, visited the Rodin Pavillion innumerable times, and night after night sat through the performances of "the wondrous art" of the famous Oriental dancer.

Through a nephew of Halle, Isadora was introduced into the world of art and artists after having been presented to Madame de St. Marceau at whose salon she danced one evening. Then followed a series of recitals given in various fashionable salons frequented by members of the French aristocracy and the reigning figures of the musical, artistic and literary worlds—André Messager, André Beaunier, Jean Lorrain, Henri Bataille, the Comtesse de Noailles, Madeleine Lemaire, the Prince and Princesse Edmond de Polignac, and Eugène Carrière, to mention only a few of the better known names.

With the latter great artist, the American dancer became quite intimate. She was introduced into his humble and affectionate family circle. He painted her portrait in his monochromatic, vaporous style, a wholly different Isadora and completely divorced from the dancing figure portrayed so many times by other artists. Later in her more affluent days she bought two of Carrière's canvases which she always treasured and which she finally parted with under the stress of extreme poverty. So delighted was the paternal Carrière with her dancing that he prepared notes for a brief *causerie* which he delivered before one of her performances in a Paris salon, sometime in 1901.

"Isadora, wishing to express emotions," he wrote, "discovered in Greek art her finest models. Full of admiration for the lovely figures of the bas-reliefs, she adopted them as her inspiration. Yet, endowed with the instinct of discovery, she returned to Nature from whence came all these gestures, and thinking to imitate and give rebirth to Greek dancing, she found her own expression. She thinks of the Greeks and obeys but herself; she offers us her own joy and her own grief. In demonstrating to us her fine feelings so beautifully, she evokes ours: as before Greek statues revived a moment for us, we are young again with her and a new hope triumphs within us. And when she expresses



Russia: 1908. Crayon drawing by Leon Bakst



Paris: ca. 1909. Portrait in oils by Eugène Carrière.



Paris: ca. 1909. Pen drawing by
Jean-Paul Lafitte

her resignation to the inevitable we also resign ourselves.

"Isadora Duncan's dance is no longer an entertaining diversion; it is a personal manifestation as well as a work of art, livelier and more fecund as an incentive to works which we ourselves are destined to do."

From this fruitful period in Paris dates not only the dancer's acquaintance with Rodin's work but also with the artist himself. Having admired almost daily his statues shown in the Rodin Pavilion at the Exposition, she finally made her way to the master's studio. This first meeting ripened into a very real mutual friendship and admiration for each other's art. Like the gentle and humble Car-

rière, the genial sculptor had a decided influence upon the young dancer. Later she was to rent one of the studios near him in the disused convent building, rue de l'Université, where Rodin created some of his noblest works.

In the year 1903, to celebrate Rodin's promotion to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor, a group of his pupils and intimate friends—among them Besnard, the distinguished painter, the sculptor Bourdelle, Octave Mirbeau, Fritz von Thaulow, and some others less well-known then—arranged an *al fresco* party at Vélizy, near Chaville, on the outskirts of Paris. Impromptu speeches were made and von Thaulow played his violin. Then, according to Frederick Lawton, who in 1907 wrote the first biography of the French master:

"Miss Isidora (sic) Duncan, an American lady, known in Paris for her rhythmic interpretations of Beethoven's music, rose and danced on the greensward, resuscitating as far as might be the terpsichorean art of old."

Here the stodgy Victorian biographer is less enthusiastic than his subject. For Rodin publicly expressed his whole-hearted appreciation of the art of the new dancer. He also made rapid sketches of her as she danced at various times. "It can be said of Isadora," he wrote, "that she has attained sculpture and emotion effortlessly. She has borrowed from Nature that force which cannot be called Talent but which is Genius.

"Miss Duncan has properly unified Life and the Dance. She is natural on the stage where people rarely are so. She makes her dance sensitive to line and is as simple as the Antiquity synonymous with Beauty. Suppleness, emotion, these high qualities which are the soul of the dance, are her complete and sovereign art."

The studies Rodin made of the dancer, like his equally well-known series of the Cambodian dancers, were rapid, calligraphic

sketches, retouched with a thin, water-color wash. They are interesting, of course, and highly personal, but lack the precision of the younger Bourdelle's innumerable sketches of the dancer, or even those done by a sculptor of lesser fame, José Clara.

This young Catalan was one of an enthusiastic band of artists who attended en masse the first public performances given by Isadora in Paris. I recall his telling me that for the first performance, fearing the hall might not be filled, Raymond and Isadora appeared at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and distributed to the astonished students, *billets de faveur*—or Annie Oakleys as Broadway jargon has it.

At these early recitals the young art students were the most vocal and zealous of the American dancer's admirers. With *sous* rashly subtracted from their meager allowances they would buy flowers at the dawn flower-market in Les Halles later to toss them at their idol's feet. In happy, noisy bands they would mob the stage doors of the Châtelet or the Gaité Theatres, where Lugné-Poé, later to become famous as an actor-manager at the Theatre de L'Oeuvre but then acting as manager for Isadora, would finally say: "*Vous, les étudiants, vous pouvez entrer.*" And often, according to my informant, when the announced program had terminated, Isadora would step to the front of the stage and say in her quaintly accented French: "*Je vais danser encore une danse pour mes amis, les étudiants des Beaux-Arts,*" embracing in that appellation all the enthusiastic spectators of the upper balconies.

As is customary among French art students, most of these budding artists brought their sketch books to the theatre and found in the dancer a much more inspiring model than the professional and official ones whose commonplace, static poses they daily transferred to paper and canvas, or modeled in clay, in the drafty *ateliers* of the state school.

José Clara was one of that enraptured



Paris: ca. 1909. Lafitte

band of devotees of Isadora Duncan, and for more than two decades afterwards he continued to set down his linear impressions of the dancer's various creations. When in 1913 Fate's first foul blow struck the artiste and it was thought that she might never again appear in public, Clara published some of his many drawings in a Paris art-review. Accompanying the sketches he wrote a brief description of the impact which Isadora made upon her audiences in the 1902-3 performances.

"No stage set except long, neutral curtains which disappeared up into darkness and left the imagination free play. Of music: the best.

"When she appeared we all had the feeling that God—that is to say Certainty, Simplicity, Grandeur and Harmony—that God was present.

"She awakened or recreated all the fervors of the Ideal and of Art; the finest dreams and highest visions were born and unfolded through the magic of her movements.

"Never was Prayer more ardent, Victory more irresistible, Virgin purer, Graces younger, Fury more tragic, Serenity more luminous than she—Isadora."

One is reminded here of the story told of Emerson and Margaret Fuller who had gone to see Fanny Ellsler during her tour of America in the 1840's. "Margaret," said the poet-philosopher, "this is poetry!" "Waldo," she corrected fervently, "this is religion."

Of these early appearances of Isadora before the Parisian public, another more detailed and literary account was written at the time by the dramatist, Henri Lavedan, then at the height of his fame. Like Elie Faure, the art historian, like Mario Meunier, the distinguished Hellenist, like the artists Carrière, Rodin, Bourdelle, Grandjouan, like the poet Fernand Divoire and a host of lesser figures, Lavedan could only speak of the new dancer in dithyrambic measures, piling up superlatives.

"On an empty stage, faintly lighted, unfurnished, simply and severely draped at the back and sides with a soft, blue fabric, a young woman, vital, beautiful, has been able without the aid of any artifice and without uttering a word, to hold an audience for two hours, in one of the largest theatres of Paris. She was alone, draped rather than dressed, and so simply that the tinted veils glorified rather than betrayed the vibrant yet statuesque beauty of her body. And the end of all this beauty and courage was to celebrate a Greek dance with bare feet; this she did with such spirit that she held a vast

crowd alert, charmed, deeply moved and silent while the dance lasted. It was all accomplished before the most critical audience in the world by Isadora Duncan. . . .

"Imagine for yourself a woman with a body that suggests the perfection of Greek sculpture, without the slightest resemblance to the modern French figure. The proportions are so exquisite, so harmonious that one naturally relates the whole to the thought of a pedestal. . . . Straight, slender as a sapling, robust hips, with legs at once feminine and virile, bust fragile, with the shoulders of a young girl, arms charming and energetic and curving like a precious chaplet from finger to throat—the head of Athene by Greuze. Thus to one's first astonished and enraptured gaze, Isadora appeared, without a suggestion of self-consciousness, yet slightly timid, modest but proud, her brow without a shadow and a faint smile in her eyes."

Such ecstatic praise naturally re-echoed throughout Europe and from her Parisian triumphs Isadora danced across the continent to conquer in turn, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Greece. Everywhere she went she was fêted; her press notices as she once expressed it to me, were no mere prosaic criticisms but were poetic dithyrambs. As always, the artists, delighting in her plastic beauty, sketched her, modeled her, painted in oil and water-color, "*die göttliche, heilige Isadora*." Von Kaulbach, Schott, Bakst, Gordon Craig, are a few of the artists whose published representations of the dancer have come down to us from that first decade of the 20th century.

Gordon Craig, then in Germany, was just beginning to evolve his theories of stagecraft and design; he was the first artist to publish in book form—or rather in large portfolio form—a series of studies of the young dancer. The very limited edition was published in Munich in 1906, the drawings having been



Paris: ca. 1910. Pastel sketches by Maurice Denis. (*L'Art Decoratif*, August 1913)

done the year before.² It was the forerunner of ten albums or books of drawings of Isadora done at various times and places, the latest being the Walkowitz³ pamphlet published only last year.

The second volume dedicated wholly to the dances of the American dancer was a strange collection of calligraphic sketches in pen and ink by a French artist, Jean-Paul Lafitte. Published in the year 1910 by the then enterprising *Mercure de France*, it is notable for its preface from the pen of Elie Faure, the distinguished critic and art-historian. In part, Faure wrote:

"Yes, we wept when we saw her. It was no longer to our eyes, nor to our ears; it was no longer to our nerves that she spoke. From deep within us, when she danced, there arose a flood that swept away from the corners of our soul all the filth which had been piled up there by those who for twenty centuries had bequeathed to us their critique, their ethics, and their judgments. . . .

"When we eagerly watched her we rediscovered that primitive purity which, every two or three thousand years, reappears from the depth of the abyss of our worn-out conscience to restore a holy animality to us again. . . .

"Isadora! you have given us the certitude that the day is near when we shall once more come in fecund contact with instinctive life. You are the first flower of a tree still

close to the earth and hidden among the old stripped trunks of a dying forest; but that tree will grow fiercely and scatter its seeds to make the forest thick and green again. . . ."

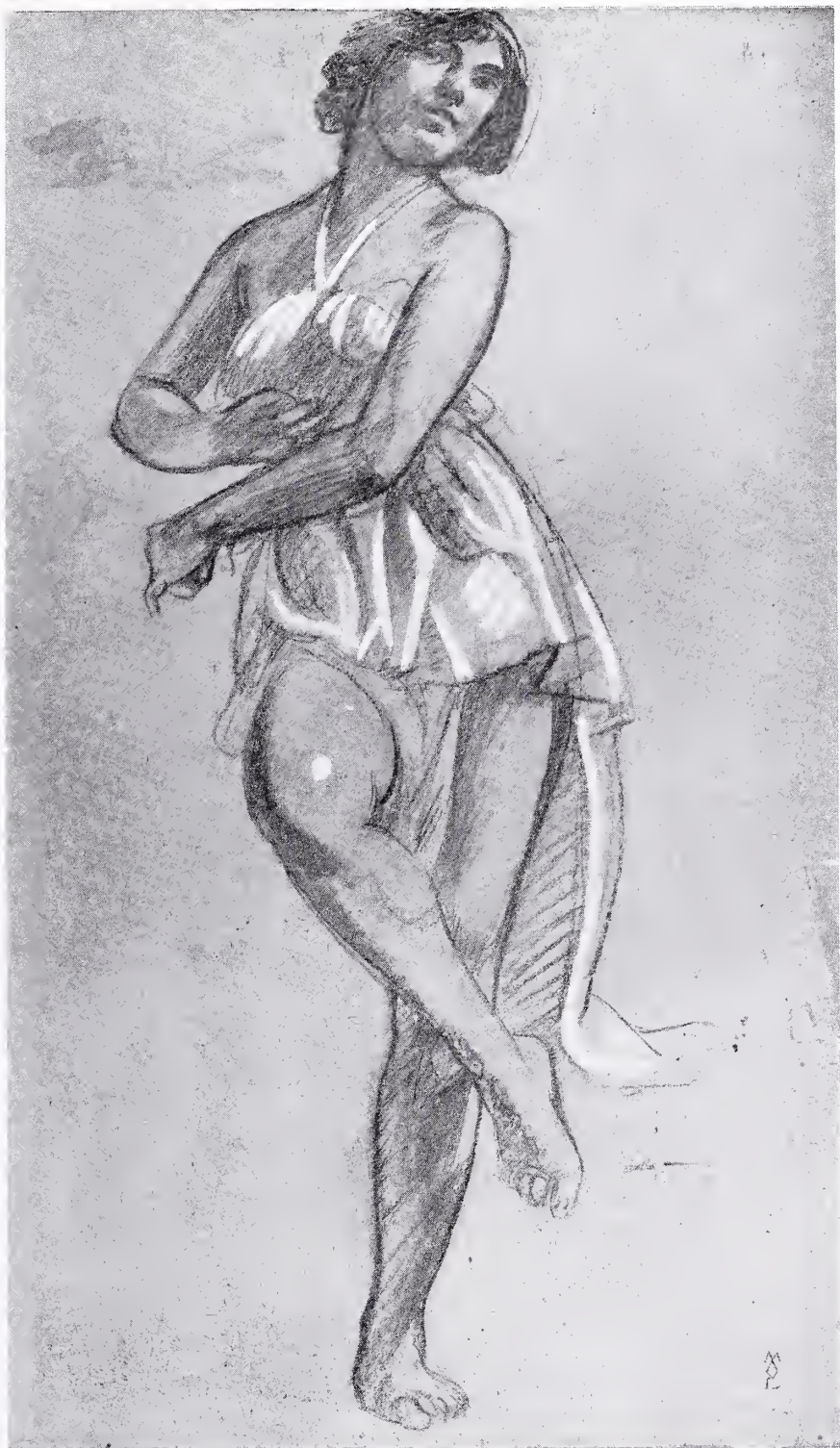
Faure had almost nothing to say of Lafitte's bold pen scratches. In most cases Lafitte had not cared about getting a likeness of the dancer; with a few quick strokes he sought to catch the swift movement of the limbs, the essential line of the gesture, the fall of the drapery about the body. His calligraphic scratches are a long way from the delicate yet precise line of many of the drawings made about the same time by André Dunoyer de Segonzac. To my mind that artist's line drawings are among the very finest drawings of the dance in general, or of Isadora Duncan in particular, done by any modern. They have been issued in book form in two albums, one dated 1910, the other 1913, and both are, like all the other early works about the dancer, collectors items that are practically unobtainable.⁴

The pastel drawings of the Frenchman, Grandjouan, also date from the same period as the Lafitte and de Segonzac ones and in their own way convey something more of the color and movement of the dancer's creations. Twenty-five of these studies were reproduced in facsimile on the same kind of colored hand-made paper originally used by the artist. They were bound in a very handsome hand-made album—about 48 inches by 30—of which only fifty copies were offered for sale to the public. As a contemporary advertisement in one of Isadora's programs announces: "Each album has an autographed preface by Miss Duncan and is luxuriously bound in hand-tooled and hand-tinted leather. The copies are on sale at the

2. Reproduced *Dance Index*: Vol. II, No. 8, August, 1943: "Gordon Craig and the Dance." The original set is in the Department of Dance and Theatre Design, the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.

3. Part of this collection was reproduced in *Dance Index*: Vol. I, No. 1, January, 1942. "Isadora Duncan and Basic Dance" by John Martin.

4. Copies are in the Department of Dance and Theatre Design, the Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.



Paris: ca. 1910. Drawing in charcoal and white chalk by Maurice Denis as a study for the Champs Elysees Theatre murals.



Paris: ca. 1910
Pen drawing by José Clara

JOSÉ CLARA



New York. 1909. Brush drawing by Abraham Walkowitz.

price of 250 French francs (\$50.00 at the rate of exchange then) at the author's Duncansschule at Marienhöhe, Darmstadt, and at M. Grandjouan's studio, 20 rue Poliveau, Paris."

It was during that brilliant Parisian period of the dancer's career—its apex, according to some critics—that the great sculptor, Emile-Antoine Bourdelle began to make his innumerable sketches. He first saw Isadora

dance in public—apart from the Rodin family picnic in 1903—at a performance given in the Théâtre du Châtelet in 1909. From that moment on he was a devotee of the dancer and did an untold number of sketches of her, in the darkness of the theatre, or at home in his *atelier*, recalling in tranquility the divine movements which had given his sculptor's soul so much unalloyed pleasure.

In a letter dated September 10, 1912,



Paris: ca. 1911. Pen drawings by André Dunoyer de Segonzac.



Paris: 1913. Théâtre des Champs Elysées. Architecture by the Brothers Perret. Sculptured reliefs by Antoine Bourdelle.



Paris: 1916. La Marseillaise. Wash and ink drawing by Antoine Bourdelle.

written to Gabriel Thomas, Director of the Musée Grévin who had just been appointed to commission artists to decorate the new Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, then being constructed by the Perret brothers, Bourdelle recalls the occasion and says:

“To me it seemed that there, through her, was animated an ineffable frieze wherein divine frescoes slowly became human realities. Each leap, each attitude of the great artiste remains in lightning flashes in my memory.”

Later, at some soirée he saw Isadora again; she danced with the phenomenal star

of the Ballets Russes—Nijinski. In Bourdelle’s private papers, notes of this evening were found.

“It seemed to me in my mind, as I watched Madame Isadora Duncan sitting or reclining, that with each of her pauses she was offering me an antique marble throbbing with eternity. . . .

“I thought as I watched you: Phidias is working there.

“When you danced there was no break; it was like the seasons that follow one after the other in due course. . . .

“Miss Duncan was like an eternal priestess; evoking all the masterpieces of the noblest and highest antiquity, suscitating all the masterpieces to come and that through her superbly human heart.”

Later, in 1913, Bourdelle again wrote:

“When the great Isadora Duncan danced



Paris: ca. 1910. La Marseillaise. Pen drawing by José Clara.

before me, thirty years of my life looking at all the great human masterpieces became suddenly animated in these planes ordained from within by the spirit's aspiration."

As for Nijinski, this is how the sculptor saw him:

"Nijinski is filled with the dark effluvium of free animals. He is abrupt, but naively more than human, and he has something of the sacred animal."

When Bourdelle began to think about his bas-relief, "The Dance," for the façade of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, he noted down his first conception:

"The Dance is perhaps pretty, but it is also grave. It is like a meditation, at least I would like it to be so.

"Isadora, bending and throwing back her



Paris: ca. 1916. Wash and ink drawing by Bourdelle.



Paris: ca. 1910. José Clara.

fine head, closes her eyes to dance within in her pure emotion.

"Her hands lightly touch the marble sky. They seem to die and their life pass away in well-arranged planes.

"He, the dancer, a Nijinski, tears himself away with a wild leap from the marble still holding him fast. His bony feet are lifted far from the earth but the block will retain this man who carries within him the winged genius of the birds."

Speaking to some of his students long after the famous theatre was built and decorated, Bourdelle said:



New York: ca. 1915. Pencil sketch by John Sloan.
(*The Masses*, 1915)

"All my muses in the theatre are movements seized during Isadora's flight; she was my principal source.

"And all of you will have recognized Isadora Duncan who soars in my frieze beside the pensive Apollo whose lyre dictated her marvellous dance to her.

"With the nine different visages which I have been able to seize from many women's faces, it is still she, Isadora, who in my frieze clashes with Isadora, in the frenzy of the hymn or the surrender of the offering."

Thus it is that the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées—one of the most beautiful in the world—is in part a great monument to Isadora. For not only is she ever-present in all Bourdelle's work, in the bas-reliefs of the

marble façade of the building; but within, her movements and the very folds of her tunic appear variously in many of the frescos which decorate the entrance hall and the corridors. In the great circular auditorium itself she looks down in many different guises from the 16 meter panel "The Dance" above the stage and also from its 13 meter companion piece, "The Symphony" two of the four great murals which Maurice Denis painted. Her influence is also there in the gilded bas-relief panel, "The Dance" also by Maurice Denis, which shows six of her child dancers. She is there, too, on the decorative curtain, "Fête Dionysiaque," the work of K. X. Roussel, which hangs in the smaller Théâtre de la Comédie that adjoins the larger auditorium.

As has already been said, Bourdelle drew, both from life and from memory, innumerable sketches of Isadora. It was his intention at one time, I believe, to gather some of them into book form. Many of them had already been published in periodicals but a large group of the best, probably those selected for the proposed book, were left one day in a tramway by the absent-minded sculptor and were never recovered again. An essay by Elie Faure published in "La Revue de la Femme," in 1927 was probably intended, I should imagine from a certain indication in the text, as a preface to this volume. Faure's previous preface for the Lafitte studies published in 1910 has already been mentioned. His later piece, not only because of the author's increased eminence as an art historian and writer on esthetics, but because of his evaluation of the dancer and the sculptor's work, warrants being reprinted to the extent that space allows. I have therefore made the translation which follows:

"I have never experienced a livelier emotion than on the day when I saw Isadora dance for the first time. It increased the second time, perhaps, and was renewed the

third. But after that it decreased each time. For I am forced to say, having written long ago a dithyrambic piece about her, that I no longer think of her today (1927) as I thought of her during the first days of the revelation.

"I came—quickly enough—to find that art didactic, wholly cultural, expressing only an interior life subtly set forth. It exhibited ideas, even principles, more than it expressed feeling or passions. It showed more knowledge than genius, more will than rapture, and less living harmonies than 'plastic equivalences.' Isadora demonstrated while dancing. In turn she indicated in an absolutely perfect way the Bacchante and the Suppliant, the Justiciary and the Warrior, the Virgin and the Seducer, and everything that might be most definite and fully defined. I confess that the slightest Spanish dancer, thin, nervous, black as a dried olive, has more spiritual flame in her convulsive little finger than ever had that great body, sculptural as ever female body could be. The American dancer had studied dancing on the flanks of vases. But the Ronda dancer carried the dance in her own flanks. One had the unlimited sense of voluptuousness, death and universal vanity; the other had the exact sense of the art.

"I had come to think this of the great artiste. But before the atrocious fate which tried to make her an ill-starred woman, I revised my judgment. . . . Pity made me more just. She conquered, by the silent command of my heart, the protest of my mind—which I had thought steadfast—against the glory that shone about the astonishing creature. I had wished to see a virtuoso in the dancer. I discovered an animator in the woman.

"It is she whom I discover in the stubborn mask drawn by Bourdelle. She created an immense movement. In the wake of the illusions she scattered like a sower, she caused to sprout in the souls of poets, danc-



New York: ca. 1916. Pen drawing from memory by Robert Henri (from "The Touchstone," Vol. 2, page 5; October 1917.)

ers, sculptors, painters, and in the anonymous masses, so many emotions that are not visible but echo from place to place, creating a state of collective sensibility where the seed grows effortlessly. She rehabilitated the dance, forgotten or unknown, the humble and glorious dance, guardian, with song and popular pottery, of the concrete genius of races, ceaselessly deformed and slandered by professional artists. It was she who, in the West, preceded the triumphal entry of the Russian dancers. It was she who opened the way to the secret passages which unite by so many interwoven undulations, music and plastic art. It was she who prepared the way for the enthronement of rhythm alone, as a permanent factor of esthetic mystery, on the



ca. 1920. Crayon drawing by Van Deering Perrine, used on the program-cover for the Russian tour of 1921.

ruins of naturalism, academicism, romanticism, classicism, and in general of all the schools which, above everything else, attempt to represent the object. Without doubt she helped the nascent cinema to discover its real sense outside the theatre, outside the imitation of forms, in that single silent empire of rhythm where dancing, painting, sculpture and music confusedly meet.

"This great esthetic drama which washes over us and toward which, more than anyone else, Isadora has impelled us, none has lived it better than Bourdelle with his double genius wherein the most spontaneous symbolism that ever was in sculpture is

locked in an ardent embrace with the sensual and realistic craft of the most accomplished of craftsmen. Two faculties which often in him express the most heartrending of the tragedies of the intelligence, that flow one over the other or join in an endless struggle where one downs the other; at other times impetuously mounting together to twist, in a single sheaf, the fuel and the fire."

Thus far I have only spoken of the European artists who drew, painted, and modeled Isadora Duncan. And that because chronologically they come before the American artists; also, in quality and quantity their work is often far superior to that done by the dancer's compatriots. Isadora, however, was not ignored by the artists of America, nor did her dance go unappreciated or unlimned.

One of her earliest admirers was the eminent Chicago sculptor, Lorado Taft. To him she was, he said: "Poetry personified. She is not the Tenth Muse but all the Nine Muses in one—and painting and sculpture as well."

Robert Henri was also among the first and most articulate of her admirers among the band of artists who acclaimed her upon her first American tour after her European triumphs. He spoke of her as "perhaps one of the greatest masters of gesture the world has ever seen." She "carries us through a universe in a single movement of her body. Her hand alone held aloft becomes a shape of infinite significance." "Isadora Duncan," he said again, "dances and fills the universe. She exceeds all ordinary measure."

Another artist of the period who did many and, according to those who remember them, superb drawings of the dancer, was the painter Arthur B. Davies. Unfortunately they were all destroyed in a fire which occurred in the artist's studio. Luckier than Davies has been the painter, Abraham Wal-

kowitz. He also, dating from that period, made an uncountable number of sketches of his favorite dancer. But he has seen to it that they have been placed in the safe-keeping of such sure custodians as the print departments of museums and libraries.⁵

Last year Walkowitz crowded together a vast collection of these sketches into an over-size pamphlet, which despite the laudable intentions of the artist, cannot be said to stand up alongside the European publications. Whatever the merits of the drawings—and some of Walkowitz's first drawings were done with obvious emotional fire and technical surety—the lack of typographical taste with which they are set forth in this pamphlet takes away much of their value.

Drawings by two American artists were especial favorites of Isadora. One chalk drawing by Van Deering Perrine she used on the cover of her programs at the Century Theatre in New York during the Spring season in 1915, at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1916, and several times in Russia. A pen and ink drawing of "Les Funerailles" by Ruth Reeves—one of a series done during the 1920 season at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées—was used as a program cover during a *tournée* in Belgium and Holland a few years later.

Mention should surely be made here of the photographic studies of Isadora Duncan made by two Americans and unsurpassed by any others made abroad. Arnold Genthe's many studies of the dancer and her creations—some of these were published in book form in 1928—and the Acropolis series done by Edward Steichen, are not at all dwarfed in the presence of works in other pictorial mediums done by some of the world's greatest artists. Both Genthe and Steichen have raised photography, to quote the former,

5. Several hundred sketches are in the Department of Dance and Theatre Design, the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y.



Paris: ca. 1922. Wash and ink drawing by Bourdelle.

"from the mechanical lifeless medium it had become, to the dignity and status of a real art."

In looking over the diverse studies of the dancer done at various periods by these two Americans, one can only regret that neither photographer ever had the necessary equipment or the foresight to film at least one of the dance creations of Isadora—the ineffable little waltz, say, to the music of Brahms, (Op. 39.) or the mighty and tragic *Marehe Slave* of Tchaikovsky. As the poet Shaemas O'Sheel has said: "A few reels of film, by



Paris: ca. 1924. Chalk drawing by Grandjouan.

New York: ca. 1920. "Adagio Lamentoso." Brush and ink drawing by Ruth Reeves from "The Quill," Vol. 8, no. 2, February 1921.

which the presence, the rhythm, the grace, the imperious gesture of Isadora could be evoked at will, immediate and mobile—what a treasure they would be!"⁶

Since that treasure has been denied us we must be content with what has been bequeathed to us by Rodin and Bourdelle and de Segonzac and Clara and the happy host of great men who saw her, and had the ready wit and pictorial talent to set down for future generations some of the beauty and the magic of the Daughter of Dionysus, Isadora Duncan.



6. A Russian friend took a candid-camera film of Mary Desti and Isadora on their way to Nice, in an automobile in 1927, near Lyons. There were no dance films taken of her.

Albums and Books of Drawings of Isadora Duncan

- ALGI, Van Saanen. **Isadora Duncan.** A book of line drawings. Paris. 1920 (?).
- BOURDELLE, Emile-Antoine. **Isadora Duncan, Fille de Prométhée.** Water-color and line drawings with poems by Fernand Divoire. Les Muses Françaises. Paris. 1919.
- CLARA, José. **Isadora Duncan.*** An album of 72 plates. Drawings in water-color and line. Preface in French by Georges Denis. Reider. Paris. 1928.
- CRAIG, Edward Gordon. **Sechs Bewegungstudien.*** An album of six lithographic drawings, each matted and loose. Prologue in German. Limited Edition. Leipzig. 1906.
- de SEGONZAC, Andre Dunoyer. **Dessins sur les danses d'Isadora Duncan précédés de La Danseuse de Diane.** Line drawings. (Preface in French by Fernand Divoire.) Limited Edition. La Belle Edition. Paris. 1910.
- de SEGONZAC, Andre Dunoyer. **XXX Dessins*:** Line drawings of Isadora alone and with her child dancers. (Also a few of Ida Rubinstein, and some studies of boxers.) Limited Edition. Les Editions du Temps Present. Paris. 1913.
- GRANDJOUAN. A series of 25 colored pastel facsimiles on colored, hand-made paper. Paris. 1913 (?).
- JACQUES, Lucien. **Isadora Duncan.** A book of line drawings. Paris. 1920 (?).
- LAFITTE, Jean-Paul. **Les Danses d'Isadora Duncan.** A book of line drawings. 38 Plates. In four sections: The Religious Dances; The Vases; The Bacchantes; The Return of the Warriors. Preface in French by Elie Faure. Mercure de France. 1910.
- WALKOWITZ, Abraham. **Isadora Duncan in her Dance.*** Pamphlet of water-color and line drawings. Forewords by Mary Fanton Roberts, Maria-Theresa, Carl Van Vechten, Arnold Genthe and Shaemus O'Sheel. Haldeman-Julius. Kansas City. 1945.

Photographs

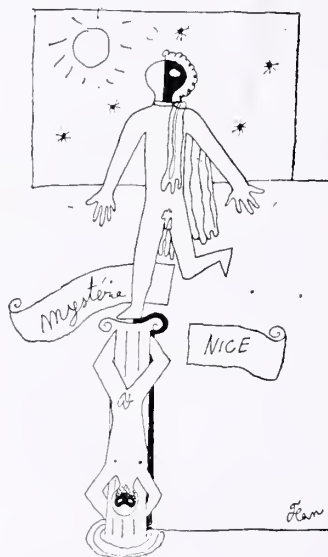
- GENTHE, Arnold. 24 Photographic studies of Isadora Duncan* Foreword by Max Eastman. Mitchel Kennerly. New York and London. 1929.

* In the Department of Dance and Theatre Design, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

STUDIO ISADORA DUNCAN
343, PROMENADE DES ANGLAIS — NICE

— MARDI 14 SEPTEMBRE 1926 A 5 HEURES —

RECITAL JEAN COCTEAU
AVEC LE CONCORDS D'ISADORA DUNCAN
DE L'AUTEUR ET DE MARCEL HERRAND



Nice: 1926. Program cover for public recital. Pen drawing by Jean Cocteau